

Definitions of the Seven Intelligences

From *Frames of Mind: The Theory of Multiple Intelligences*, by Howard Gardner; Basic Books, Inc.: 1983;
with some slight contributions by J. Keith Rogers, Brigham Young University, 1994

1. VERBAL / LINGUISTIC INTELLIGENCE

Verbal/Linguistic intelligence is: the ability to use with clarity the core operations of language. People with verbal/linguistic intelligence have a sensitivity to the meaning of words -- the capacity to follow rules of grammar, and, on carefully selected occasions, to violate them. At a somewhat more sensory level -- a sensitivity to the sounds, rhythms, inflections, and meters of words -- that ability which can make even poetry in a foreign tongue beautiful to hear. And a sensitivity to the different functions of language -- its potential to excite, convince, stimulate, convey information, or simply to please (73-98) Poets, authors, reporters, speakers, attorneys, talk-show hosts, and politicians may exhibit linguistic intelligence.

2. MUSICAL / RHYTHMIC INTELLIGENCE

Musical/Rhythmic intelligence is: the ability to use the core set of musical elements -- pitch, rhythm, and timbre (understanding the characteristic qualities of a tone). For example, Leonard Bernstein had lots of it; Mozart presumably, had even more. As with any intelligence, it is displayed in various degrees of intensity, from the avant-garde composer attempting to create music, to the fledgling listener who is trying to make sense of nursery rhymes. There may well be a hierarchy of difficulty involved in various roles, with performing exacting more demands than listening does, and composing making more profound (or at least different) demands than performing. Musical ability is hard to define or pin down. It has roots in emotion, affect and pleasure. As Roger Sessions put it, "music is controlled movement of sound and time . . . It is made by humans who want it, enjoy it, and even love it." (99-127) Musical Intelligence may be demonstrated by singers, composers, instrumentalists, conductors, and by those who enjoy, understand, use, or appreciate music.

3. LOGICAL / MATHEMATICAL INTELLIGENCE

Logical/Mathematical intelligence is: the ability to use logic and mathematical ability as well as scientific ability. What characterizes individuals with high logical-mathematical intelligence is a love for abstraction. Mathematicians must be absolutely rigorous and perennially skeptical: no fact can be accepted unless it has been proven rigorously by steps that are derived from universally accepted first principles. They must handle skillfully long chains of reasoning and be able to recognize significant problems and solve them. While science and mathematics are closely allied, they can be clearly distinguished. While mathematicians are interested in exploring abstract systems for their own sake, scientists are motivated by a desire to explain physical reality. For the scientist, mathematics is a tool for building models and theories that can describe and, eventually, explain the operation of the world. (128-169) Mathematicians, engineers, physicists, astronomers, scientists, researchers may demonstrate Logical/Mathematical intelligence.

4. VISUAL / SPATIAL INTELLIGENCE

Spatial intelligence is: the capacity to perceive the visual world accurately, and to be able to re-create one's visual experience. It entails a number of loosely related capacities; the ability to recognize instances of the same element; the ability to recognize transformations of one element in another; the capacity to conjure up mental imagery and then transform that imagery; the ability to produce a graphic likeness of spatial information; and the like. A person with a good sense of direction or the ability to maneuver and operate well in the world would have a high degree of spatial intelligence, as well as someone who works with graphic depictions of the spatial world, such as maps, diagrams, paintings or sculptures. (170-204) Sailors, engineers, surgeons, sculptors, and painters all have highly developed spatial intelligence, as well as cartographers and architects.

5. BODY / KINESTHETIC INTELLIGENCE

Bodily/Kinesthetic intelligence is: the ability to control one's bodily motions and the ability to handle objects skillfully. The role of the body is central, also, for inventors or actors. Those possessing high levels of bodily/kinesthetic intelligence utilize their bodies, or parts of their bodies, as a means to fashion products, solve problems, or express themselves. Dancers, swimmers, acrobats, for example, develop keen mastery over the motions of their bodies, as well as those individuals, like artisans, ball players, jugglers, and instrumentalists, who are able to manipulate objects with finesse. (205-236)

6. INTRA-PERSONAL INTELLIGENCE

Intra-personal intelligence is: the ability to form an accurate model of oneself, and to use that model to operate effectively in life. Intra-personal intelligence is, at its most basic level, the capacity to distinguish a feeling of pleasure from one of emotional pain and, on the basis of such discrimination, to become more involved in or to withdraw from a situation. At its most advanced level, intra-personal intelligence is the capacity to detect and to symbolize complex and highly differentiated sets of feelings. One finds this intelligence developed in the novelist who can write introspectively about feelings; in the patient (or therapist) who comes to attain a deep knowledge of his/her own feeling life, in the wise elder who draws upon his/her own wealth of inner experiences in order to advise members of this community, in psychologists and philosophers. (237-276)

7. INTER-PERSONAL INTELLIGENCE

Inter-Personal intelligence is: the ability to notice and make distinctions among other individuals and, in particular, among their moods, temperaments, motivations, and intentions. Inter-personal intelligence turns outward, to other individuals. Examined in its most elementary form, the inter-personal intelligence entails the capacity of the young child to discriminate among the individuals around him/her and to detect their various moods. In an advanced form, inter-personal intelligence permits a skilled adult to read the intentions and desires -- even when those desires have been hidden -- of many other individuals and, potentially, to act upon this knowledge -- for example, by influencing a group of individuals to behave along desired lines. We see highly developed forms of inter-personal intelligence in political or religious leaders (a Mahatma Gandhi or Lyndon B. Johnson, etc.), in skilled parents or teachers, and in individuals enrolled in helping professions; like therapists or counselors (237-276)

THREE FORMS IN THE FAMILY OF SEVEN (Gardner, p. 276)

"Having now reviewed at considerable length our family of seven intelligences, we might perhaps conceptualize them in broad strokes in the following way. The 'object-related' forms of intelligence -- spatial, logical-mathematical, bodily-kinesthetic -- are subject to one kind of control: that actually exerted by the structure and the functions of the particular objects with which individuals come into contact. Were our physical universe structured differently, these intelligences would presumably assume different forms. Our 'object-free' forms of intelligence -- language and music -- are not fashioned or channeled by the physical world but, instead, reflect the structures of particular languages and music. They may also reflect features of the auditory and oral systems, though (as we have seen) language and music may each develop, at least to some extent, in the absence of these sensory modalities. Finally, the personal forms of intelligence reflect a set of powerful and competing restraints: the existence of one's own person; the existence of other persons; the culture's presentations and interpretations of selves. There will be universal features of any sense of person or self, but also considerably cultural nuances, reflecting a host of historical and individuating factors."